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CHAPTER

SYSTEMS PLANS

INTRODUCTION

Many of the planning issues for the Meadowlands District are District-wide in nature or affect significant portions of the District. These issues concern various systems, including the natural environment, economic development, transportation, housing, community facilities, and historic resources. Plans for these six systems are called systems plans and are presented in this chapter. Although each system is presented as a distinct element, the systems generally involve complex inter-relationships. For example, an economic development strategy would likely have implications for the natural environment and transportation.

Other planning issues concern smaller, distinct districts or areas located within the District, each with its own identity and potential. These plans are called area plans and are included as Chapter 11. The area plans are the narrative connection to the Land Use Plan, a map of locations for the desired types of development in the District.

Together, the systems and area plans compose the core of the comprehensive plan. Their strategies will guide the realization of the overall vision for the Meadowlands District.

SYSTEM 1: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Commission seeks to safeguard the environmental resources of the Meadowlands District and to provide quality public recreation and educational opportunities.

Strategy 1-Preserve wide expanses of land for open space, wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities. Planned enhancements identified to date are included in Map 14, the Green Map. To maintain and restore additional habitat, open space, and recreational opportunities, the NJMC will prepare and implement a comprehensive wildlife management and conservation plan. The plan will include the following actions:

- Target and prioritize potential preservation sites for acquisition, deed restriction, and/or conservation easements, including large tracts of wetlands. Sites will be identified from an inventory of vacant land in the District, including lots in their entirety and sizable open space portions of otherwise developed parcels of land. Wetlands will be preserved for wildlife, water quality, and flood storage value. At the direction of the Governor of the State of New Jersey, the NJMC will work towards the creation of a wetlands preservation and wildlife management system. The NJMC will review preservation sites for potential wetland enhancement and mitigation.

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- Improve connections among the District's trails and habitats, reducing fragmentation. The NJMC will identify missing links in the existing trail system, as well as key locations for connecting to wildlife viewing stations, environmental venues, boat launches/docks, and active and passive recreational attractions.
- Increase both active and passive recreational uses. Recreational facilities and opportunities should be available on an equal basis, accessible to all citizens.
- Prepare an inventory of animal and plant species considered high priority for habitat management. The inventory can assist with protecting sensitive species, the proliferation of species which are key to the local ecosystem, and identification of species for education and research.
- Reduce the presence of the invasive *Phragmites australis* (common reed) plant, where appropriate, and establish vegetation mosaics that are more beneficial to wildlife. Monocultures of dense *Phragmites* provide shelter and protection from predators, but the reeds are so dense at some locations that they are difficult, if not impossible for some wildlife to penetrate. Wildlife should increase in numbers from the introduction of a variety of vegetative types more conducive to the needs of many species, particularly migratory waterfowl.
- Eliminate or control the presence of other invasive plant and animal species.
- Maintain and improve targeted habitats relative to breeding, wintering, feeding, and other wildlife activities. Maintain the value of the Meadowlands as an urban sanctuary for birds using the Atlantic Flyway.
- Seek available funding for land acquisition, protection, and management of wildlife preserves; consider an application for National Wildlife Refuge status to attract a wider range of funding.

Strategy 2-Enhance and capitalize on the Meadowland's waterways as a defining asset of the District. The Hackensack River system is a key natural resource presenting unrealized social and economic opportunities.

- Maintain and restore the ecology of the waterways, including the estuary, shorelines, and nursery habitat for fish.
- Reestablish hydrologic functions. Locations of barriers or impediments that negatively impact hydrologic functions will be identified and proposed for removal where practical. The reintroduction of water, especially tidal water, will enhance hydrologic functions. Among the benefits that may be readily noted include improved water quality, increased tidal flow, retention of flood waters, nutrient retention, filtering of contaminants, habitat enhancement from greater available food sources, increases in dissolved oxygen, and more open water.
- Create interconnected networks of open spaces along the river network (also part of Strategy 1), to include, but not be limited to, greenways. Establish public places that offer river views and access to all groups for activities such as fishing, boating, and walking along waterways.
- Seek development opportunities at designated locations along the rivers that have a relationship to and enhance the waterways. The individual and cumulative effects of development on the river system would need to be evaluated.
- Develop strategies and seek pertinent funding for flood control based on flood modeling currently underway for the Meadowlands District and surrounding lands in the Lower Hack-

ensack River watershed; reduce the amount of impervious surfaces that contribute to flooding.

- Control water pollution from point and non-point sources. Control tools include remediation of contaminated properties, which includes landfills in the watershed; innovative technologies, such as “green” infrastructure and best management practices for controlling stormwater runoff from development; continuing to create constructed wetlands; and assisting municipalities and wastewater treatment plants with developing long-term control plans to separate combined sewer systems where feasible.
- Continue monitoring water quality by collecting and analyzing data to determine trends, document improvements, and assess the need for additional or more stringent measures. Monitoring should include the analysis of historic data to form a baseline to measure the degree of improvement over time.

Strategy 3-Encourage emission reductions of pollutants from mobile and stationary sources to improve the metropolitan area’s air quality.

- Monitor regional air quality to determine trends and the need for additional or more stringent actions. Perform traffic analyses to determine trends and recommend additional actions. The NJMC is undertaking a study of the air quality around Teterboro Airport based on concerns regarding the numbers of small jets departing and arriving at the airport daily.
- Permit types of land development in patterns that will influence the choices of travel modes available through zoning, planning for areas in need of redevelopment, and design guidelines. Implement smart growth transportation initiatives to enhance the viability of future projects. For example, locating jobs and services in closer proximity reduces reliance upon the automobile. Other strategies to be considered for the District include transit-oriented development, infill development, brownfield redevelopment, mixed-use development, shared parking, and promoting employer incentives for employee transit use.
- Facilitate and promote alternatives to automobile travel, such as mass transit, bicycling, and walkable communities. This requires strong cooperation among local, State and Federal governments, public interest groups, and the private sector.

Strategy 4-Promote environmental education and awareness in the metropolitan area. The NJMC can build upon the successes of its educational programs and facilities in various ways:

- Promote programs of the Meadowlands Environment Center for school children and the general public. Programs are geared to a variety of age groups and interests. The NJMC is partnering with Ramapo College to reach new audiences and under-served populations through broadened environmental education programs. The NJMC aims to introduce subjects such as ecology of the estuary, wildlife appreciation, solid waste/recycling, and archaeology/geology to encourage people of all ages to appreciate their surroundings and become stewards of the environment. Lesson plans can be made available for downloading from the NJMC website for educators’ use in the classroom.
- Create satellite teaching facilities in the field with hands-on education focusing on the benefits of a clean environment. The facilities can be located at strategic sites along Meadows Path and other trails within the District. Satellite teaching areas may range from small facilities or experiences such as bird blinds, wetlands or water quality monitoring stations, and

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waterfront decks for collecting field samples to larger venues such as a field station building for public outreach programs, classes, data collection, experiments, and archive displays.

- Continue research opportunities through the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute and other higher educational facilities in the metropolitan area. Promote research related to flora and fauna, water and air quality, geology, and the history and culture of the Meadowlands. Baseline data, research findings, and reports can be made available to the general public via the NJMC Digital Meadowlands website and library.
- Share long-term monitoring results pertaining to water and air quality and other indicators of sustainability that demonstrate environmental impacts and trends. Results will streamline the collection and analysis of data for environmental impact assessment purposes and assist in NJMC staff review of proposed development projects.
- Promote the public's role in environmental stewardship via the Commission's website, eco-tourism, and other suitable means. Information about the environment will be readily available to the public in a format easily understood by people from diverse backgrounds, education levels and ages. The result will be a greater awareness concerning "quality of life" issues and their importance to future generations.

SYSTEM 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Commission will foster a healthy economy for the District while enhancing the environment of the Meadowlands and promoting the well-being of its constituent municipalities. Emphasis will be placed upon redevelopment and infill development, while minimizing the development of greenfields, or relatively untouched areas.

Strategy 1-Cultivate a sense of place unique to the District. To successfully promote the District as a desirable location for selected business and industry, mixed use development, transit villages, eco-tourism, recreation, and homeowners, the Meadowlands would benefit from greater place recognition. This strategy draws upon the Meadowlands' unique and memorable places, particularly its waterways and wetlands that offer a "regional breathing space." The Commission, its constituent municipalities, and the private sector would partner to develop a course of action. Several aspects to consider include:

- Clearly defined boundaries so that visitors know when they are entering and leaving the District.
- Coordinated signage at exit points from primary roadways, particularly Routes 3 and 17, to inform visitors about place names and the local attractions and services available. This would reinforce the value of the District's unique natural and cultural resources.
- Enhanced public areas. Design techniques can bring order and harmony to the public realm of streetscapes, parks, other landscaped areas, building design, and transportation. Holding special events and activities in public areas can reinforce their identity.
- Improved connectivity among commercial, educational, and cultural facilities and activities including the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority complex. Facilities should not be isolated, but physically integrated into their communities. Brochures and links among Internet sites are among the possible promotional tools. Also, the NJMC can consider development requirements or incentives for adopting a scale of development that is inviting to

pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Greenbelts and greenways can define and connect facilities.

- Educating the public about those aspects of the Meadowlands that are unique, as described under the previous system, **Natural Environment**.

Strategy 2-Realize the opportunities provided by brownfield and grayfield sites. Redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields can revitalize the District by improving the tax base, creating businesses and jobs, preserving open space, and preventing sprawl. The Commission shall expand upon existing efforts to guide development of brownfield and grayfield sites.

For instance, the Paterson Plank Road redevelopment area, located near major transportation arteries and the Sports Complex, provides a prime opportunity to contribute to knowledge of brownfield redevelopment. A major portion of the area was chosen as a USEPA Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot in late 1999. The Pilot involves environmental investigations to reduce the uncertainty regarding contamination to developers. A technical work group including representatives of several local, State, and Federal agencies with specialized knowledge in areas of concern to the study area meets regularly. The Pilot will produce a case study for use in subsequent brownfield initiatives.

The general process for identifying and redeveloping brownfield and grayfield sites will utilize the NJMC's redevelopment authority. Basic steps follow:

- The NJMC shall prepare an inventory of brownfield and grayfield sites in the District. Properties would be selected and prioritized based upon specified criteria, such as listing in a State contamination database (brownfields only); proximity to another site with evidence of serious contamination (brownfields only); the existence of other public health risks; redevelopment potential; and developer interest.
- The sites of the highest priority may then be deemed "in need of redevelopment" in accordance with the NJMC's redevelopment powers.
- Redevelopment plans would be prepared and adopted for the "in need" sites. Unless there is compelling reason to pursue an alternative type of development, the permitted land use(s) would be consistent with the uses designated for the planning area in which the site is located per Chapter 11, Land Use Plan.
- The NJMC would assist in marketing the properties with incentives to potential redevelopers.
- For brownfield sites, the NJMC can assist the selected redeveloper with the remediation process by coordinating technical assistance from State and federal agencies and identifying financial assistance programs suitable to the project. There are a growing number of loan, grant, and tax incentives programs applicable for brownfield redevelopment.

Strategy 3-Strengthen economic partnerships to encourage a variety of commercial and industrial uses at suitable locations that will diversify the District's economic base.

- The NJMC's website offers a valuable promotional tool. Links will be established with the governments of Bergen and Hudson counties; the Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce; Meadowlands municipalities; and State, Federal, and private non-profit entities offering economic assistance programs including the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

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- Information regarding technical and financial assistance available to business and property owners can be available at the Commission's offices.
- A District-wide information base regarding commercial and industrial properties for sale or for rent should be developed and maintained on the Internet with appropriate web links, either by the NJMC or by another suitable entity.

Strategy 4-Promote the use of innovative technology in buildings and business operations.

Examples are automation; high-cube warehouse buildings; and "green buildings," or high performance buildings that are energy efficient. Green buildings are designed and constructed in accordance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Green Building Rating System developed by the US Green Building Council, a coalition of building industry representatives. Such technologies can result in increased production, lower overhead, and more efficient business practices.

Strategy 5-Continue to make the development review process more efficient and effective.

This will encourage developer interest in the District and promote the completion of beneficial projects in as short a timeframe as possible. The NJMC shall re-examine the overall process and coordinate with other State, local, and Federal agencies to streamline the permitting process where possible. The Commission will refine its use of information technology.

SYSTEM 3: TRANSPORTATION

The Commission will promote the improvement of the current transportation network and the ability of the Meadowlands District and its surrounding area to meet future demands. Improvements should be designed to minimize the degradation and fragmentation of wildlife habitats. Planning strategies for the District must view the Meadowlands as not only a vital component of the northern New Jersey transportation system, but also a destination in its own right.

The regional system consists of Hudson, Bergen, and other northern New Jersey counties. The system serves the world's largest regional consumer market. Increased port and rail traffic have put added strain on transportation routes as they generate more truck traffic. The increased freight movement has also put pressure on the development of vacant and underutilized properties for intermodal usage and warehousing. Strategies must consider the capacity and efficiency of regional systems.

Strategies must also take advantage of the location of existing and proposed transit facilities in the District. For example, the Frank R. Lautenberg Station at Secaucus Junction will provide the needed synergy for a significant investment of infrastructure and the creation of employment centers in the Meadowlands. Secaucus Junction and its surrounding area will be planned as a "transit village," described in the next chapter. Other locations in the District are also planned for transit villages. These planning areas will incorporate smart growth principles, multi-modal transit, and other transportation facilities. Intense development will be permitted at a scale compatible with the community and the capacity of the overall transportation network.

FIGURES 10.1—10.3 *These images suggest various ways the District can promote a unique sense of place.*

FIGURE 10.1 (upper) *This sign appears at key locations along the Borough of Rutherford's borders. Coordinated signage at exit points from primary roadways can inform visitors about place names and the local attractions and services available.*



FIGURE 10.2 (middle) *The new Secaucus Public Library and Business Resource Center at 1379 Paterson Plank Road. Building design can enhance public areas and reinforce their identity.*



FIGURE 10.3 (lower) *The NJMC's annual Riverfest is an example of how holding special events and activities in public areas can reinforce the District's identity. NJMC's educational programs are geared to a variety of age groups and interests.*



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The redevelopment of the Sports and Exposition Authority property will enhance the opportunity to bring transit facilities to the District. The combination of a significant demand for transit on game days and special events along with the future development of a regional retail and entertainment center that includes substantial office space will spur the coming of mass transit to the location. It may also serve other important land uses in the District.

The multi-modal transportation centers may include not only rail and bus transportation to other locations in the District and beyond, but also shuttle services to smaller employment locations. Pedestrian transportation will be strongly encouraged by the placement of destinations within walking distance of the centers. Where practical, park and ride facilities will be encouraged to divert motorists from the regional highways to transit systems.

The following strategies will foster the availability of various modal choices, particularly public transit, walking, and biking. They will also promote the interconnectivity of the transportation network where necessary and feasible.

Strategy 1-Enhance coordination and cooperation among local and regional transportation agencies. Engaging these agencies is essential to the development and implementation of the programs, projects and plans that will improve the balance and capacity of the roadway and transit systems. Among the NJMC's roles and considerations:

- Prepare a transportation improvement plan designated "Meadowlands Mobility 2030" and introduce the plan concurrently with the Commission's adoption of the NJMC Master Plan. Meadowlands Mobility 2030 will determine priority projects, establish guidelines on where and how to invest transportation dollars, and recommend funding alternatives. Emphasis will be placed on transportation options, including rail, bus, roads, walking, bicycling, and ridesharing, for people who live or work within the District. The plan will be a cooperative product of the NJMC, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, New Jersey Transit, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, Bergen and Hudson counties, the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce, the District's constituent municipalities, and environmental groups.
- On-going coordination with various agencies to reduce traffic delays as measured by levels-of-service.
- Seek coordination and consistency among local and regional plans and approaches regarding improvements to roadways, railways and other modes of transportation, including the Regional Transportation Plan prepared by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and the Port Authority's Comprehensive Port Improvement Plan.
- Ensure that improvements maintain or enhance both the natural environment and the safety of transportation facilities.
- Generate and maintain data for use in transportation studies, land use, and transportation modeling/simulation.

Strategy 2- Improve the inter-relationship between land use and the transportation system through the NJMC's policies and regulations.

- Adopt uniform criteria for 1) identifying land use impacts upon the capacity of the transportation network; 2) traffic impact studies prepared in connection with proposed development

projects; 3) transportation safety design in site plan requirements; and 4) design guidelines that improve circulation and safety on roadways, railways, and pedestrian facilities within the District.

- Assess the parking needs of the District, develop strategies to improve parking conditions, and address any deficiencies.
- Create development opportunities for airport support services adjacent to the Teterboro Airport.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing one or more innovative transportation districts based on the concept of a Transportation Enhancement District (TED), a Transportation Oriented Development (TOD), or a Transportation Improvement District (TID). A portion of the Town of Secaucus, the Paterson Plank Road area, the area around the Sports Complex site, or even the District itself offer the potential for the establishment of innovative transportation-related districts.

Secaucus – The outlet centers, warehouse/distribution sites, office centers, and Secaucus Junction contain the right components for the establishment of a transportation district that could serve as a regional model of relating transportation uses to land uses. The Secaucus Junction area would also serve as the main hub to other district transportation hubs that may be established.

Paterson Plank Road and NJ Sports & Exposition Authority Area (NJSEA) – Paterson Plank Road (PPR), including the NJSEA area west of the Hackensack River, provides a major access corridor to the center of the District and a link to several major highways including Route 17, Route 3, Route 120, and the NJ Turnpike. The PPR corridor also has significant redevelopment potential in conjunction with the NJSEA area. These factors make PPR a prime location to establish a Transportation Improvement District and a multi-modal transportation hub. The PPR corridor could then be linked to a larger transportation hub such as Secaucus Junction.

Meadowlands District — As a transportation district, the Meadowlands District would be able to insure coordination with other transportation stakeholders, generate resources through impact fees and special assessments to reduce some of the demands upon the State's Transportation Trust Fund, and create a structure for developers to pay their fair share of costs for regional transportation improvements.

Strategy 3-Promote vehicular free flow throughout the District. An efficient and effective roadway network can be realized through improving critical links in the system, enhancing access to transit facilities, and introducing innovative methods to reduce traffic and improve traffic flow. The "Mobility 2030" transportation plan will take into account currently proposed roadway improvement projects while considering additional roadway projects that could improve the system. It will consider the interrelationships among roadways, land uses, and the transit system. Through that plan and various other initiatives, the NJMC will support or address the following needs as appropriate:

- Determine which segments of the existing transportation network require capacity increases through the use of Transportation System Management methods.
- Identify the need for and encourage improvements to highways and other major roadways within and around the District. The development of an interrelated transportation network

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is essential to creating a harmonious transportation system that both respects the environment and facilitates the movement of people and goods in an efficient and effective manner.

Strategy 4-Encourage the use of transit through an integrated transit and multi-modal transportation system. An integrated system will enable efficient access to cultural, commercial, environmental, employment, and residential centers in the Meadowlands District. Alternative transportation modes, particularly rail and light rail, will need to assume a larger role in reducing traffic problems, especially in congested corridors such as the Meadowlands area.

- Identify transportation network improvements that create circulation links among roadways, railways and other related facilities within and near the District.
- Coordinate efforts in connecting transit, pedestrian, and parking facilities to provide greater accessibility among transportation modes within and around the district. These are the transportation interconnectivity measures that can be applied:
 1. Park-and-ride facilities for bus and rail access
 2. Multi/intermodal access centers and transit villages that interconnect with other transit facilities
 3. More efficient bus routing to avoid redundant or unnecessary service
 4. Bus shelters at heavily used bus stops
 5. Coordination with NJ Transit and other bus and shuttle operators to provide more efficient service
 6. Coordination of public transit modes and schedules, especially between bus and train transfers
 7. Improved modal choices, including vehicle, public transit, walking, biking, and other forms of transportation for residents, employees and travelers within and through the District
 8. Employee trip reduction programs that provide incentives to employees to use transit services
- Encourage the development of transit and paratransit programs for mobility of persons with disabilities and seniors seeking to access the transportation network.

Transit Villages - Intermodal centers interconnected with a mix of land uses and services that are suitable for transit services and pedestrianism. The establishment of Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) or Transit Development Districts (TDD) would require regulations, financial mechanisms, and incentives. The Frank R. Lautenberg Station at Secaucus Junction and the golf course redevelopment area have been identified as having the potential for Transit Villages in the District.

Strategy 5-Promote pedestrian movement and bicycle access in an integrated system. Continuing partnerships with the District's counties and municipalities will be valuable in the planning and development of pedestrian and bicycle trails.

- Prepare a study that assesses pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Develop policy that requires sidewalks for any new development or transportation improvement district.
- Provide pedestrian links among public transit, open space, trails, sidewalks, economic and employment centers, and housing.

- Encourage an appropriate spatial orientation of structures to the surrounding streetscapes and the dedication of pedestrian areas to improve access to and from transit facilities and adjacent land uses.
- Encourage the installment of sidewalks in areas where segments are missing.
- Encourage the development of pedestrian walkways/bridges over major roadways to link pedestrian oriented land uses and improves pedestrian safety.
- Encourage the development of waterfront esplanades.
- Coordinate the development of pedestrian and bicycle trails with NJDOT and NJ Transit.

Strategy 6-Foster the development of an integrated intermodal freight system. The system would establish distinct truck routes, encourage the use of freight rail systems to reduce truck trips, and locate supporting uses adjacent to intermodal facilities.

- Improve rail links to increase capacity in and through the Meadowlands District.
- Encourage freight movement by rail.
- Encourage the placement of intermodal and larger distribution sites near rail and highway locations.
- Investigate freight capacity and expansion options.
- Encourage and establish truck routing that uses major roadways and highways and limits access through local residential areas.
- Encourage freight movement by trucks during non-commuter peak periods.
- Promote the separation of rail and roadway crossings, especially at roadways that have moderate to heavy traffic volumes or pedestrian activity.
- Prepare an intermodal freight study to investigate the relationship of the regional freight movement to the Meadowlands District.
- Encourage Foreign Trade Zone designation for appropriate locations in the District.

SYSTEM 4: HOUSING

The regional shortage of suitable, affordable housing causes many District residents and employees to pay excessive portions of their income for housing costs or to reside at locations far away from employment. To alleviate the shortage, the District's housing inventory would benefit from a more balanced mix of housing types and costs. The chapters analyzing existing conditions in the District have demonstrated, however, that there is very limited vacant land that is suitable for any additional residential units within the NJMC's jurisdiction.

Another key consideration in formulating housing policy is the strong relationship that exists between the locations and numbers of the resident populations and the capacity of essential municipal services, including fire, police, emergency squads, and schools. Therefore, the NJMC places its housing policy in a municipal context, with guidance to the District's municipalities in planning and decision-making. The Commission will work with its municipalities to address the following housing strategies through local initiatives and available state and federal programs.

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Strategy 1-Permit the creation of additional housing units in existing residential areas or mixed use development within the limits of available infrastructure, community facilities, and the natural environment. The land use plan in Chapter 11 and the accompanying Map #15 delineate planning areas where residential development would be permitted. In the planning area known as Secaucus Transit Center, housing would be permitted along the riverfront. Housing as part of mixed use development may be permitted in a portion of the Waterfront Development area and in the Resort Recreation Community area. Village areas could include low-density housing. The Airport area would include very limited residential uses. The District's existing trailer parks would be permitted to continue along with other nonconforming housing, even though their overall quality may be considered less than desirable. Many households residing in trailer home communities are of lower income and benefit from the affordable alternative they provide. The NJMC encourages aesthetic enhancements to these facilities over time.

The land use plan promotes the development of clustered or higher density housing. Such housing is less expensive to service on a per-household basis, because infrastructure and public services are spread over a smaller geographic area. Development should be located in areas with sufficient roadways, utilities, schools, and emergency services to serve the projected increase in population. Another consideration is the proposed development's proximity to businesses providing needed services and jobs.

Prior to approving any new housing, the NJMC may require a limited fiscal impact analysis, based on the size of development being proposed. The analysis would look at the location and capacity of utilities, schools, and emergency services, traffic volume and movement, the costs of providing services for the development in comparison to taxes generated by the development, and the ability of the individual municipalities to accommodate and service the development. Additionally, a traffic analysis may be required in order to determine the ability of the existing infrastructure to handle new development. The NJMC would work with the municipalities to determine any necessary mitigating measures. The municipality, developer, and the NJMC would enter into a developer's agreement to offset extraordinary fiscal impacts caused by the development.

Strategy 2-Encourage the District's municipalities to bring substandard housing to standard condition through a program of code enforcement and rehabilitation. Property maintenance codes should be enforced. Where a homeowner has been cited but is unable to afford repairs, the owner can be referred to appropriate resources for rehabilitation assistance. Jersey City and the Township of North Bergen receive annual funding allocations under the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Jersey City also receives a federal allocation under the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. Both funding sources can be used for housing rehabilitation where the occupying household is considered to be of low or moderate income, in accordance with regulations of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Owners of housing located in other District municipalities can apply for assistance through the CDBG or HOME programs operated by their counties. The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency also offers assistance through programs that support local public and private partnerships. Rehabilitation activity should seek to minimize the displacement and relocation of families to the greatest extent possible.

Strategy 3-Spur the production of affordable housing in the region. The State of New Jersey’s affordable housing requirements result from the State’s Fair Housing Act of 1985, adopted by the New Jersey legislature in response to the “Mount Laurel” decisions of the New Jersey Supreme Court. Per Mount Laurel, each municipality has a constitutional obligation to establish a “realistic opportunity” for providing a “regional fair share of current and future need” for housing affordable to households of low and moderate income. A low-income household has an income equal to 50 percent or less of the median gross household income for households of the same size within the housing region. A moderate-income household has income in excess of 50 percent but less than 80 percent of the median gross household income for households of the same size within the housing region.

The Fair Housing Act also established the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) to prepare a comprehensive planning and implementation response to the constitutional obligation. The District’s municipalities are part of COAH’s Region I, which includes Bergen, Hudson, Passaic, and Sussex counties. COAH’s current income limits for Region I appear in Figure 10.4 below.

FIGURE 10.4 2003 INCOME LIMITS FOR REGION I Bergen, Hudson, Passaic, and Sussex Counties								
	-----Household Size-----							
Income	1-Person	2-Person	3-Person	4-Person	5-Person	6-Person	7-Person	8-Person
Median	\$49,511	\$56,584	\$63,657	\$70,730	\$76,388	\$82,047	\$87,705	\$93,364
Moderate	\$39,609	\$45,267	\$50,926	\$56,584	\$61,111	\$65,637	\$70,164	\$74,691
Low	\$24,756	\$28,292	\$31,829	\$35,365	\$38,194	\$41,023	\$43,853	\$46,682
<i>Source: New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing, adopted May 7, 2003</i>								

The Fair Housing Act requires each municipality to prepare and adopt a housing element and fair share plan as part of its master plan. The housing element must address the municipal affordable housing obligation, to include, per the Municipal Land Use Law, “residential standards and proposals for the construction and improvement of housing.” The municipality may petition COAH for “substantive certification” of its housing element and fair share plan to engage COAH’s mediation and review process. Substantive certification refers to a determination by COAH approving a municipality’s housing element and fair share plan in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Housing Act and COAH’s regulations. To be certified by COAH, the plan must establish a realistic opportunity for the provision of COAH’s affordable housing allocation. A grant of substantive certification shall be valid for a period of ten years.

The NJMC will pursue a Memorandum of Understanding with COAH regarding the shared goal of providing the opportunity for affordable housing within the Meadowlands District and its fourteen municipalities. It will also prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Hackensack Meadowlands Municipal Committee detailing how affordable housing will be ad-

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addressed by the NJMC and its constituent municipalities. The MOA will effectuate COAH regulations regarding inclusionary developments, Regional Contribution Agreements (RCA's), senior citizen housing, rehabilitation of substandard housing, petitions for certification of housing elements and fair share plans, development fee ordinances, and other instruments and actions as appropriate.

The NJMC, in cooperation with COAH, will work with each District municipality to determine a plan for meeting its COAH allocation, including the identification of suitable locations for housing. A significant limitation to the municipalities meeting their obligations is the lack of available land capacity, particularly for land within the District. Vast, vacant areas in the Meadowslands have environmental constraints precluding the construction of housing. These environmentally sensitive areas consist of wetlands, flood hazard areas, and former landfills. Additional areas in the District are designated as conservation, parklands, and open space lands. In accordance with its regulations, COAH has adhered to the NJMC's policies in delineating these environmentally sensitive lands (NJAC 5:93-4.2(e)). COAH approved vacant land adjustments for the two towns in the District with certified housing elements, Ridgefield and Teterboro.

Rehabilitation of substandard housing may provide COAH credits, depending on the nature of the municipality's housing allocation. Appropriate controls would need to be put in place for the units to meet COAH's requirements on affordability. Some funding sources for rehabilitation are listed under Strategy 2.

The Commission will also award grants to its constituent municipalities for the purpose of preparing housing elements and fair share plans that would be submitted to COAH for substantive certification or recertification. The Commission has worked informally with its constituent municipalities over the years to develop affordable housing in a manner that allows the local flexibility permitted by COAH regulations. The successes of the Town of Secaucus and the Borough of Teterboro are noteworthy examples. Secaucus has instituted a development fee ordinance and spending plan, approved by COAH. Using those funds, the Town has selected sites outside the District to develop new, affordable units and rehabilitate existing units. Also, a major development within the District is currently under construction and will include affordable units. At Teterboro's request, the NJMC prepared a redevelopment plan to allow for new housing, also with an affordable component.

The NJMC encourages the development of residential uses in accordance with COAH guidelines. The municipality may satisfy its COAH responsibility with any residential development in the District. In those cases in which a municipality seeks to use available sites within the District in order to provide for its affordable housing obligation, the Commission will consider a municipal petition to rezone a non-residential property provided that

- the municipality has considered all out-of-District alternatives and in-District residential zones; and
- all reasonable attempts have been made to minimize the environmental impact of the development, including but not limited to a careful consideration of a variety of affordable housing types.

Under no circumstances will wetlands be impacted for housing needs.

In this manner, the town can determine the best way to meet its COAH obligation through projects located inside and/or outside the District.

To promote the actual production of affordable units, the NJMC will consider seeking a change to COAH regulations that would authorize the Commission to establish and operate a regional development fee pool. The pool would capture funds from new development in the District and deposit them into established escrow accounts. Those municipalities that do not already have a development fee ordinance could apply to the pool for projects that meet COAH requirements. The distribution of funds from the pool would require the approval of the NJMC and the requesting municipality's governing body. Municipalities that have established development fee ordinances would operate outside of this pool under the existing COAH regulations for such funds.

An additional economic incentive for municipalities to produce affordable housing could be achieved through modifying the NJMC's Intermunicipal Tax Sharing Formula. Any modification may require an amendment to the Commission's legislation.

Strategy 4-Encourage development of housing for people 55 and over who currently reside in the region and wish to continue to live here. The NJMC will ensure that its new zoning regulations do not restrict the opportunity for such housing to be developed. According to the Census 2000, one-third of the households in the two counties include at least one person 60 years and over. More housing opportunities are needed for maturing and older householders seeking to downsize or reside in proximity to retail, recreation facilities, and transit. COAH recognizes this need in its current regulations by allowing municipalities to reserve up to 25 percent of their allocations for age-restricted units.

SYSTEM 5: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Master Plan is an expression of the Commission's desire for the Meadowlands District to attain its full potential as a land resource of incalculable opportunity for new jobs, homes, and recreational sites. This vision cannot be achieved without a strong supporting system of community facilities.

Strategy 1-Encourage the District's municipalities to provide a suitable array of community facilities to support anticipated population, employment and economic growth.

- Develop or update municipal facilities plans in consultation with Commission staff. The NJMC can support municipalities' facilities planning and improvements to operations by continuing to offer access to Geographic Information System (GIS) data. With GIS, the NJMC can assist municipalities in combining detailed land information from satellite images with census data and local municipal contributions, turning data into visual problem solving tools for day-to-day operations, emergency management, and long-term planning. Accessible, expanded databases can assist several municipal functions, including planning, zoning, fire, police, and public safety.

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- Continue partnering through shared services and expand the use of shared services where feasible.
- Use NJMC and municipal websites to provide information about services and programs and render certain services, such as licensing, permitting, and paying fees and fines. Conducting such transactions via the Internet reduces automobile use, provides easier and more timely access, and enables the processing of transactions more efficiently.

Strategy 2-Consider the support capacity of community facilities and private utilities when planning or reviewing types and levels of development. Prior to issuing zoning approvals for additional residential units or other new development, the NJMC will confer with any affected municipalities and/or utility providers to determine if there is available capacity to service new projects or if expansion of utilities or service units would be needed. The NJMC will require a limited fiscal impact analysis for proposals involving the creation of new housing units. Utility expansion should be based upon demand levels and environmental considerations.

Strategy 3-Conduct appropriate analyses that support emergency planning. Comprehensive plans can be powerful tools for protecting communities against losses from emergencies and disasters. Disaster preparedness contributes to a sustainable future. Mitigation and recovery can improve the quality of life with regard to public health and safety, environmental stewardship, and social and economic security.

The NJMC has an Emergency Management Plan. The Commission has formed an Emergency Management/Continuation of Government Committee to manage the plan, including its implementation, related exercises with employee involvement, and revisions as necessary. The following activities are considerations for emergency management planning in the District:

- Identify risks to the District from flood.
- Develop mitigation strategies to eliminate or reduce the probability of a flood disaster. Examples include restricting new construction in vulnerable areas, increasing building elevations to reduce the threat of flooding, and adopting other requirements for sites/buildings to be more hazard-resistant.
- Restricting access to site and building plans.
- Design suitable response activities by the Commission following an emergency or disaster to provide emergency assistance to victims.

Strategy 4-Support disaster preparedness and mitigation activities by the District's municipalities. Effective emergency planning requires the collection, analysis, and sharing of location-based data. Through its Geographic Information System (GIS), the NJMC can continue to offer assistance to municipalities in combining detailed land information from satellite images with census data and local municipal contributions, turning data into visual problem solving tools for emergency management.

SYSTEM 6: HISTORIC RESOURCES

The NJMC will strive to preserve, protect and sustain the unique historic and archaeological resources of the Meadowlands.

Strategy 1-Preserve the District's historic and archaeological heritage. The NJMC will refine the inventory of significant resources included in Chapter 9. The Commission will review the potential effects to these resources associated with any applications for development, including those applications that concern sites adjacent to such resources. It will consult with SHPO regarding any appropriate mitigating actions that should be undertaken.

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